

The Postmistress of Laurel Run.

BY BRET HARTE.

Francis Bret Harte is a native of Albany, N. Y., where he was born 52 years ago, of English, German and Hebrew ancestry. While yet a boy, his father, who had been a professor in a woman's school, died, and in 1834 the family went to California.

Living in the rude mining settlements of the interior, and mingling with the rough characters that peopled them, the boy absorbed from actual experience many of the incidents which afterward grew under his magic touch into the now familiar idyls of the embattled diggings, the lawless flat, and the immoral bar.

The first three years of his life in California he had all the mixed fortunes of a pioneer, and tried his hand at many means of livelihood. For a time he was a compositor in a newspaper office at Eureka; then he mined for himself, without largely increasing his fortune. As a school teacher he was able to indulge more liberally the literary taste awakened by his work as a printer. These latter experiences, afterward grew, with all their natural color and textures, into the delicate study entitled "Miss." A year's work as express messenger gave him the clear-cut pictures of Yuba Hill and other knights of the stage.

In 1857 Mr. Harte went to San Francisco, taking his place as a compositor in the office of the Golden Era. A few Bohemian sketches written as a copy brought him under the favorable notice of the editor, and he was at once translated from the case to the desk. It was in 1863 that his first sketch appeared in the East. More than 10 years ago he left America to be consul at Glasgow, and although he has been superseded in that office, he continues to live abroad, his home being in a London suburb.

CHAPTER I.

The mail stage had just passed Laurel Run. So rapidly that the whirling cloud of dust dragged with it down the steep grade from the summit hung over the level long after the stage had vanished, and then drifting away, slowly sifted a red precipitate over the hot platform of the Laurel Run post office.

Out of this cloud presently emerged the neat figure of the postmistress, with the mail bag which had been dexterously flung at her feet from the top of the passing vehicle.

A dozen loungers eagerly stretched out their hands to assist her, but the warning, "It's agin the rules, boys, for any but her to touch it," from a bystander, and a coquettish shake of the head from the postmistress herself—much more effective than any official interdiction—withheld them.

The bag was not heavy—Laurel Run was too recent a settlement to have attracted much correspondence—and the young woman, having pounced upon her prey with a certain feline instinct, dragged it, not without difficulty, behind the partitioned enclosure in the office and locked the door. Her pretty face, momentarily visible through the window, was slightly flushed with the exertion, and the loose ends of her fair hair, wet with perspiration, curled themselves over her forehead into tantalizing little rings.

But the window shutter was quickly closed, and this momentary but charming vision withdrawn from the waiting public.

"Gov'ment oughter have more sense than to make a woman pick mail bags over the road," said Jo Simmons, sympathetically. "Tain't in her day's work anyhow. Gov'ment oughter hand 'em over to her like a lady. It's rich enough and ugly enough."

"Tain't gov'ment; it's that stage company's airs and graces," interrupted a newcomer. "They think it's mighty fine to go beltin' by, makin' everybody take their dust, because stoppin' ain't in their contract. Why, if that express man who chucked down the bag had any feelin's for a lady—" But he stopped here at the amused faces of his auditors.

"Guess you don't know much o' that expressman's feelin's, stranger," said Simmons, gruffly. "Why, you oughter see him just nussin' that bag like a baby, as he comes tearin' down the grade, and then rise up and sorter heave it to Mrs. Baker, ez if it was a \$5 bakay! His feelin's for her! Why he's give himself so dead away to her that he was looking for him to forget what he's doin' next, and just come a sailing down hisself at her feet."

Meanwhile on the other side of the partition, Mrs. Baker had brushed the red dust from the padlocked bag, and removed what seemed to be a supplementary package attached to it by a wire.

Opening it, she found a handsome scent-bottle, evidently a superadded gift from the devoted expressman. This she put aside with a slight smile and the murmured word, "Foolishness."

But when she had unlocked the bag, even its sacred interior was also profaned by a covert parcel from the adjacent postmaster at Burnt Ridge, containing a gold "specimen" brooch and some circus tickets.

It was laid aside with the other. This also was vanity—and presumably—velexation of spirit.

The delivery was consequently more or less protracted, but when each man had exchanged his three or four minutes' conversation with the fair postmistress, a conversation at times impeded by bashfulness or timidity, on his part solely, or restricted often to vague smiling, he resignedly made way for the next.

It was a formal levee, mitigated by the informality of rustic tact, great good humor and infinite patience, and would have been amusing had it not always been terribly in earnest and at times touching.

For it was peculiar to the place and the epoch, and indeed implied the whole history of Mrs. Baker.

She was the wife of John Baker, the foreman of "The Last Chance," now for a year lying dead under half a mile of crushed and beaten in tunnel at Burnt Ridge.

There had been a sudden outcry from the depths at high, hot noontide one day, and John had rushed from his cabin, his young, foolish, flirting wife clinging to him, to answer that despairing cry.

But she rose suddenly with a pale face, and said: "Go, John; I will wait for you here." He went; the men were freed, but she had waited for him ever since.

Yet in the shock of the calamity, and in the after struggles of the poverty which had come to the ruined camp, she had scarcely changed.

But the men had. Although she was, to all appearances, the same giddy, pretty Betsy Baker who had been so disturbing to the younger members, they seemed no longer to be disturbed by her.

A certain disturbed awe and respect, as of the martyred spirit of John Baker still held his arm around her, seemed to have come upon them all. They held their breath as this pretty woman, whose brief mourning had not seemed to affect her cheerfulness or even playfulness of spirit, passed before them. But she stood by her cabin and the

camp, the only woman in a settlement of 40 men, during the darkest hours of their fortune.

When brighter days came and the settlement had increased by one or two families, and laggard capital had been hurried up to relieve the still beleaguered and locked-up wealth of Burnt Ridge, the needs of the community and the claims of the widow of John Baker were so well told in political quarters that the post office of Laurel Run was created expressly for her.

During the first week the sale of stamps at Laurel Run post office was unprecedented in the annals of the department. Fancy prices were given for the first issues; then they were bought wildly, recklessly, unprofitably, and on all occasions. Complimentary congratulations at the little window invariably ended with "and a dollar's worth of stamps, Mrs. Baker."

It was felt to be supremely delicate to buy only the highest priced stamps, without reference to their adequacy; then more quantity was sought: then outgoing letters were all overpaid and stamped in outrageous proportion to their weight and even size.

The imbecility of this, and its probable effect on the reputation of Laurel Run at the general post office, being pointed out by Mrs. Baker, stamps were adopted as local currency and even for decorative purposes on mirrors and the walls of cabins.

How long the extravagance would have continued is not known, but it was not until it was rumored that, in consequence of this excessive flow of business, the department had concluded that a postmaster would be better fitted for the place that it abated, and a compromise was effected with the general office by a permanent salary to the postmistress.

Such was the history of Mrs. Baker, who had just finished her afternoon levee, nodded a smiling "goodby" to her last customer and closed her shutter again.

Then she took up her own letters, but before reading them, glanced, with a pretty impatience at the two official envelopes addressed to herself, which she had shelved.

They were generally a "lot of new rules," or "notifications," or "absurd" questions which had nothing to do with Laurel Run, and only bothered her and "made her head ache," and she had usually referred them to her admiring neighbor at Hickory Hill for explanation, who had generally returned them to her with the brief indorsement, "Purp. stuff, don't bother," or, "Hog wash, let it slide."

She remembered now that he had not returned the two last. With knotted brows and a slight pout she put aside her private correspondence and tore open the first one. It referred with official courtesy to an unanswered communication of the previous week, and was "compelled to remind her of rule 47." Again those horrid rules!

She opened the others: the frown deepened on her brow and became fixed.

It was a summary of certain valuable money letters that had miscarried on the route, and of which they had given her previous information.

For a moment her cheeks glowed. How dare they; what did they mean?

Her waybills and registers were always right; she knew the names of every man, woman and child in her district; no such names as those borne by the missing letters had ever existed in Laurel Run; no such addresses had ever been sent from Laurel post office. It was a mean insinuation.

She would send in her resignation at once. She would get the "boys" to write an insulting letter to Senator Slocumb. Mrs. Baker had the feminine idea of government as a purely personal institution, and she would find out who it was that had put them up to this prying, crawling impudence.

It was probably that wall-eyed old wife of the postmaster of Heavytree Crossing, who was jealous of her. "Remind her of their previous unanswered communication indeed! Where was that communication, anyway? She remembered she had sent it to her admirer at Hickory Hill.

Odd that he hadn't answered it; of course he knew all about this meanness; could he, too, have dared to suspect her? The thought turned her crimson again.

He, Stanton Green, was an old "Laurel Runner," a friend of John's, a little "triflin' and 'preeminin'" but still an old loyal pioneer of the camp. Why hadn't he spoken up?

There was the soft muffled fall of a horse's hoof in the thick dust of the highway, the jingle of dismounting spurs, and a firm tread on the platform.

He was a man of 50, compactly and strongly built. A squarely cut goatee, slightly streaked with gray, fell straight from his thin-lipped but handsome mouth; his eyes were dark, humorous, yet searching.

"Good morning, Mrs. Baker," he said, pleasantly, with his hat already in his hand.

"I'm Harry Home of San Francisco." As he spoke his eye swept approvingly over the neat enclosure, the primly tied papers and well-kept pigeon-holes; the pot of flowers on her desk, her china silk mantle and killing little chip hat, and ribbons hanging against the wall, thence to her own pink-flushed face, bright blue eyes, tendrilled clinging hair, and then fell upon the leather mail bag still lying across the table.

Here it became fixed on the unfortunate wire of the amorous expressman that yet remained hanging from the brass wards of the lock, and he reached his hand toward it.

"How dare you touch it," she said, indignantly. "How dare you come in here? Who are you, anyway? Go outside at once!"

The stranger fell back with an amused deprecatory gesture and a long, silent laugh.

"I ought to have explained," he went on smilingly; but you are quite right, Mrs. Baker," he added, nodding toward the bag. "As far as you know, I had no business to go near it. Glad to see you know how to defend Uncle Sam's property so well. I was only a bit puzzled to know," pointing to the wire, "if that thing was on the bag when it was delivered to you?"

"It's only the expressman's foolishness," she said, with a slightly coquettish toss of her head. "He thinks it smart to tie some nonsense on that bag with the wire when he flings it down."

Mr. Home, with his eyes on her pretty face, seemed to think it a not inhuman or unpardonable folly.

"As long as he doesn't meddle with the inside of the bag I suppose you must put up with it," he said, laughingly.

A dreadful recollection that the Hickory Hill postmaster had used the inside of the

bag to convey his foolishness came across her. It would never do confess now.

"Now, I should like to refer an instant to my first communication to you. Have you got it handy?"

Mrs. Baker's face fell. "No; I sent it over to Mr. Green of Hickory Hill for information."

"What!"

Terrified at the sudden seriousness of the man's voice, she managed to gasp out, however, that, after her usual habit, she had not opened the official letters, but had sent them to her more experienced colleague for advice and information; that she never could understand them herself; they made her head ache, and interfered with her other duties, but he understood them, and sent her word what to do. Remembering, also, his usual style of indorsement, she grew red again.

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing; he didn't return them."

"Naturally," said Mr. Home, with a peculiar expression. After a few moments' silent stroking of his beard, he suddenly faced the frightened woman.

"You oblige me, Mrs. Baker, to speak more frankly to you than I had intended. You have, unwittingly, I believe, given information to a man whom the government suspects of speculation. You have, without knowing it, warned the postmaster at Hickory Hill that he is suspected, and as you might have frustrated our plans for tracing a series of embezzlements to their proper source, you will see that you might have also done great wrong to yourself as his only neighbor, and the next responsible person."

"When I open that bag in this office tonight, and do not find a certain decoy letter in it, which was last checked at Heavytree Crossing, I shall know that it remains in Green's possession at Hickory Hill."

"I will leave you here alone for awhile, so as to divert any suspicion. You will come, as usual, this evening, and be seen by your friends; I will only be here when the bag arrives to open it."

"Goodby, Mrs. Baker; it's a nasty bit of business, but it's all in the day's work. I've seen worse, and, thank God, you're out of it."

In the breathless silence that followed, a woodpecker took up his interrupted work on the roof, and seemed to beat out monotonously in her ear the last words of the stranger. Stanton Green—a thief! Stanton Green, one of the "boys" John had helped out of the falling tunnel! Stanton Green whose old mother in the States still wrote letters to him at Laurel Run, in a few hours to be a disgraced and ruined man for ever!

She remembered now, as a thoughtful woman remembers, tales of his extravagance and fast living, of which she had taken no heed, and, with a sense of shame, of presents sent her, that she now clearly saw must have been far beyond his means.

What should the boys say? What would John have said? Ah! what would John have done?

She started suddenly to her feet, white and cold, as on that day that she had parted from John Baker before the tunnel. She put on her hat and mantle, and going to that little iron safe that stood in the corner, unlocked it and took out its entire contents of gold and silver.

She had reached the door when another idea seized her, and opening her desk she collected her stamps to the last sheet and hurriedly rolled them up under her cape.

Then, with a glance at the clock and a rapid survey of the road from the platform, she slipped from it and seemed to be swallowed up in the waiting woods beyond.

CHAPTER II.

Once within the friendly shadows of the long belt of pines, Mrs. Baker kept them until she had left the limited settlement of Laurel Run far to the right and came upon an open slope of Burnt Ridge, where she knew Jo Simmons' mustang, Blue Lightning, would be quietly feeding.

The tool shed of Burnt Ridge tunnel, where Jo's saddle and bridle always hung, was but a cauter father on.

She reached it unperceived, and—another trick of the old days—quickly extemporized a side saddle from Simmons' Mexican tree, with its high caule and horn bar, and the aid of a blanket. Then leaping to her seat she rapidly threw off her mantle, tied it under its sleeves around her waist, tucked it under one knee, and let it fall over her horse's flanks. By this time Blue Lightning was also struck with a flash of equine recollection, and pricked up his ears. Mrs. Baker uttered a little chirping cry which he remembered, and the next moment they were both careering over the ridge.

The stage would be at Hickory Hill just before half-past eight; she ought to anticipate it, if possible—it would stay 10 minutes to change horses—she must arrive before it left.

She knew her horse, she knew the trail, she knew herself, but did she know the man to whom she was riding? A cold chill crept over her, and then she shivered in a sudden blast; it was night at last swooping down from the invisible Sierras, and possessing all it touched.

But it was only one long descent to Hickory Hill now, and she swept down securely on its wings. Half-past eight! The lights of the settlement were just ahead of her, but so, too, were the two lamps of the waiting stage before the post office and hotel.

Haply the lounging crowd were gathered around the hotel, and she slipped into the post office from the rear, unperceived. As she stepped behind the partition, its only occupant—a good-looking young fellow with a reddish mustache—turned towards her with a flush of delighted surprise.

But it changed at the sight of the white determined face that had never looked once towards him, but was fixed upon a large bag, whose yawning mouth was still open and propped up beside his desk.

"Where is the through money letter that came in that bag?" she said quickly.

"What—do—you—mean?" he stammered, with a face that had suddenly grown whiter than her own.

"I mean that it's a decoy, checked at Heavy Tree Crossing, and that Mr. Home of San Francisco is now waiting at my office for you to know if you have taken it."

The laugh and lie that he had at first tried to summon to mouth and lips never reached them. For under the spell of her rigid, truthful face he turned almost mechanically to his desk and took out a package.

"Good God! you've opened it already!" she cried, pointing to the broken seal.

The expression on her face, more than anything she had said, convinced him that she knew all. He stammered under the new alarm that her despairing tone suggest-

ed. "Yes, I was owing some bills—the collector was waiting here for the money, and I took something from the packet. But I was going to make it up by the next mail—I swear it."

"How much have you taken?"

"Only a trifle, I—"

"How much?"

"A hundred dollars!"

She dragged the money she had brought from Laurel Run from her pocket, and counting out the sum, replaced it in the open package.

He ran quickly to get the sealing wax, but she motioned him away as she dropped the package back into the mail bag.

"No; as long as the money is found in the bag the package may have been broken accidentally. Now burst open one or two of those other packages a little—so."

She took out a packet of letters and bruised their official wrappings under her, little foot until the tape fastening was loosened. "Now give me something heavy."

She caught up a brass two-pound weight, and in the same feverish but collected haste, wrapped it in paper, sealed it, stamped it and, addressing it in a large printed hand to herself at Laurel Hill, dropped it in the bag.

Then she closed it and locked it. He would have assisted her, but she again waved him away.

"Send the expressman, and keep yourself out of the way for a moment," she said curtly.

Mrs. Baker wiped her moist forehead and parched lips, and shook out her skirt. Well might the young expressman start at the unexpected revelation of those sparkling eyes and that demurely smiling mouth at the little window.

"Mrs. Baker?"

She put her finger quickly to her lips, and threw a world of unutterable and enigmatical meaning into her mischievous face.

"There's a big San Francisco swell takin' my place at Laurel to-night, Charley."

"Yes ma'am."

"And it's a pity that the omnibus way bag happened to get such a shaking up and banging round already, coming here."

"Eh?"

"I say," continued Mrs. Baker, with great gravity and dancing eyes, "that it would be just awful if that keeferly city clerk found things kinder mixed up inside when he comes to open it. I wouldn't give him trouble for the world, Charley."

"No, ma'am, it ain't like you."

"So you'll be particularly careful on my account."

"Mrs. Baker," said Charley with infinite gravity, "if that bag should tumble off a dozen times between this and Laurel Hill I'll hop down and pick it up myself."

"Thank you. Shake!"

They shook hands gravely across the window ledge.

"And you ain't goin' down with us, Mrs. Baker?"

"Of course not. It wouldn't do, for ain't here—don't you see?"

"Of course!"

Then Mrs. Baker came back into the office, and, as the wheels rolled away, threw herself into a chair and inconsistently gave way for the first time to an outburst of tears.

Then her hand was grasped suddenly.

She found Green on his knees before her. She started to her feet.

"Listen, Mrs. Baker. I have been striving to get money honestly, dishonestly—any way to look well in your eyes—to make myself worthy of you—to make myself rich and to be able to offer you a home and take you away from Laurel Run. It was all for you—it was all for love of you. Betsy, my darling. Listen to me!"

In the fury, outraged sensibility, indignation and infinite disgust that filled her little body at that moment, she should have been large, imperious, goddess-like and commanding. But God is at times ironical with suffering womanhood.

And all she could say was, "Leave me be, looney, or I'll scream!"

He rose with a weak, confused laugh, half of miserable affectation and half of real anger and shame.

"What did you come riding over here for, then? What did you take all this risk for? Why did you rush over here to share my disgrace, for you are as much mixed up with this now as I am—if you didn't calculate to share everything else with me? What did you come here for, then, if not for me?"

"Yes, John Baker, lying under half of Burnt Ridge, but more to me this day than any living man crawling over it—in—in—(oh, fatal climax!) a month o' Sundays! What did I come here for? I came here as John Baker's livin' wife to carry on dead John Baker's work."

"Yes, dirty work this time, maybe, Mrs. Green! but his work and for him only—precious! That's what I come here for; that's what I live for! that's what I'm waiting for—to be up to him and his work always! That's me—Betsy Baker!"

"Stanton Green, don't be a fool! Rise up out of this and be a man again. Take enough out of that bag to pay what you owe gov'ment, send in your resignation, and keep the rest to start you in an honest life elsewhere. But light out o' Hickory Hill before this time to-morrow."

She pulled her mantle from the wall and opened the door.

"You are going?" he said, bitterly.

"Yes."

"Yes, I'm goin' to run Blue Lightning again Charley and that way-bag back to Laurel Run, and break the record."

It is said that she did. Perhaps owing to the fact that the grade of the return journey to Laurel Hill was in her favor, and that she could avoid the long, circuitous ascent to the summit taken by the stage, or that, owing to the extraordinary difficulties in the carriage of the way-bag, which had to be twice rescued from under the wheels of the stage, she entered the Laurel Run post office as the coach leaders came trotting up the hill.

Mr. Home was already on the platform. As the bolt of the bag was drawn, revealing its chaotic interior. Mrs. Baker gave a little sigh. Home glanced quickly at her, emptied the bag upon the floor and picked up the broken and half-filled money parcel. Then he collected the scattered coins and counted them.

"It's all right, Mrs. Baker," he said, gravely. "He's safe this time."

"I'm so glad!" said little Mrs. Baker, with a hypocritical gasp.

"So am I," returned Home, with increasing gravity, as he took the coin, "for, from all I have gathered this afternoon, it seems he was an old pioneer of Laurel Run, a friend of your husband's, and, I think, more fool than knave." He was silent for a mo-

ment, clicking the coins against each other. Then he said carelessly, "Did he get quite away, Mrs. Baker?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about," said Mrs. Baker, with a lofty air of dignity, but a somewhat debasing color, "I don't see why I should know anything about it or why he should go away at all."

"Well," said Mr. Home, laying his hand gently on the widow's shoulder, "well, you see, it might have occurred to his friends that the coins were marked! That is, no doubt, the reason why he would take their good advice and go. But, as I said before, Mrs. Baker, you're all right, whatever happens, the government stands by you."

LYING ABOUT AFRICA.

Geographer Wants Attention to the Practice in a forcible manner.

A few weeks ago the *Movement Geographique* published a supplement to its regular edition containing two remarkable stories from Africa. The stories were printed in big type, double leaded, and with startling head lines. One of them was that Emin Pasha had returned to his old province and utterly routed the Mahdists, had captured an enormous amount of ivory, had reestablished his government, and was again in high feather in the equatorial province. The story was told with much circumstantiality. The other report was equally sensational, and the scene of it was located near the head waters of the Congo.

The story about Emin fell at once into the hands of news agents, and it was cabled all over the world. The *New York Sun* printed it with an expression that it was spurious, giving some reasons why the story was evidently a hoax. If the news agents had taken the trouble to look in the main sheet of *Movement Geographique* they would have seen hidden away in a corner a brief announcement that the two stories in the supplement were made out of whole cloth. Mr. Wauters, the editor, said he wished to show the persons who habitually concoct lies about African matters that he could put lies in circulation as easily as themselves. He was tired of devoting so much space to the contradiction of ridiculous falsehoods, and thought he would take a hand in the main game.

He said that yarns about Africa get currency because no contradiction from Africa can be obtained for several months. If plausible stories are invented it is easy to deceive the public for many weeks. A story he felt called upon to contradict in the same issue of his newspaper was a yarn of Portuguese origin to the effect that the natives had captured Stanley falls, a story which proved to be a canard.

There are a few people and newspapers who for one reason or another are hostile to various enterprises in Africa and who seldom let a week pass without putting some lie on the news market. We have caught a good many of these falsehoods on the wing and has given them their quietus as far as this country is concerned. Often the originators of these fables are very poorly posted in African affairs, and their ridiculous statements show at once that the alleged news is a falsehood concocted by some one who is not skilled in the art of lying about Africa.

The Riots in China.

The following is an extract of a letter to a lady whose sister has long been resident in China. It is dated Hangchow:—The rumours here were dreadful. A day was fixed to kill us and burn our houses. The people have been very friendly, kind, and sympathizing. Is it really true that they are going to burn your houses and kill you? they would ask. They would be perfectly amazed that I would go out knowing of these reports. Some were very indignant that such things should even be talked of. Though in great danger we were saved. What a victory over evil. Day and night we are still guarded with a good force, and will be till November. I was out on a little trip recently—had only one little woman with me, nothing in the way of protection of course. Everything was quiet and peaceful, and I felt quite safe. When we came back we heard of the mobs and riots. On this trip there was an evident desire to know more of this new doctrine. How did you worship this Jesus? How do you believe in Him? were questions often asked. Many wanted to learn how to pray, and I taught them short prayers. While sitting in one house, an old lady, going home in her boat heard that a foreigner was in the village, so she stopped and came where I was. She expressed her joy at meeting me. A friend had told her she must worship the true God instead of idols, and that burning incense, candles, and paper money was useless. "Please come to my village and tell me about the true God, and teach me how to pray." She was very urgent, and seemed in earnest. It did not need much persuasion to induce us to visit her. We were glad of the opportunity. After going to several other little places we found ourselves in her village. When we arrived there we met a man who knew her and another lady, both desirous to hear about the Jesus doctrine. He kindly offered to take us to her house, as he was afraid we would miss our way. This was a very pleasant introduction to the village. Here we met our old friend and many others. We spent two days here teaching the good people the precious truths of our faith.

A Murderer Haranguing a Crowd.

The Sydney papers give an account of a prisoner addressing a crowd from the walls of a prison at Deniliquin. The man, whose name is Thomas, was charged with the murder of a woman. Unobserved he managed to climb to the top of a water tank which is above the gaol walls and overlooks the street. Observing Thomas, a crowd collected, and he harangued the people respecting his crime. He said he did murder the woman, and professed great affection for her. The prison officials tried to get Thomas to descend, and the crowd dared him to commit suicide, while he had the opportunity. Archdeacon Holt, who was visiting the prisoner, went half way up a ladder and tried to induce Thomas to descend, but he would not. Meanwhile a warden crept up to the tank, and Thomas having got part of the way down a ladder, got him below the walls of the prison and out of the view of the people. The affair, which lasted nearly half an hour, naturally caused much excitement.

It is rumored that Russia has acquired a protectorate over Persia.